

by Rabbi Doniel Neustadt

Challah separation: The procedure

- Some follow the custom of adding two words to the end of the blessing: םֶשֶׁן שְׂמַח וְיָד עֹלָם One who does not have this tradition should not add these two words.¹⁴

- Challah separation: quantity of flour[16]

Dough which contains more than 3 lb. and 11 oz. (approximately 14 cups[17]) of flour requires separation of challah with a blessing. Some poskim do not permit a blessing to be recited unless at least 4 lb. and 15 oz. (approximately 19 cups) of flour are used.¹⁸

Dough which contains more than 2 lb. and 10 oz. (approximately 10 cups) of flour requires separation of challah, but no blessing is recited. Any lesser amount of flour is exempt from challah separation altogether.

It is possible that dough which was originally kneaded with less than the prescribed amount of flour would ultimately require separation of challah: If several smaller pieces of dough are combined, they are halachically considered as one. In the following three cases the doughs may be considered as one dough:¹⁹

- 1.If the doughs are [or were previously] pressed together tightly enough so that when they are separated they will stick to one another, they are considered as one dough and challah must be separated from one of them.
- 2.Even if the doughs are not [or were not] pressed together but are placed in one deep utensil²⁰ and are touching each other,²¹ they require hafrashas challah and challah must be separated from one of them. Note that even if the doughs have been baked into bread or cakes and then placed together in one utensil, they will require hafrashas challah at that point. [An oven, a refrigerator or a freezer is not considered a utensil which combines small doughs or baked goods into one big unit, particularly if the items are individually wrapped.²²]
- 3.Even if the doughs are not [or were not] pressed together and are not [or were not] placed in one utensil, but are lying on a counter or on a table and are touching each other and are completely wrapped up in a cloth, they are considered as one dough and challah must be separated from one of them.²³ Note that even if the doughs have been baked into bread or cakes and then wrapped together, they will require hafrashas challah at that point.

The following exception to the above rule applies: If there are two batters which have different sets of ingredients and thus taste different from each other, or even if they taste the same but were made by two different people, or even if they were made by one person but she does not want to mix them or combine them, or even if she does not care whether they are mixed but the flours are from grain grown in two separate years "then they are not considered as one dough, even if they are pressed together or touching each other in the same utensil.

This information is useful for women who are baking several doughs, each of which contains less than the minimum amount of flour. Women who would like to incur the obligation and fulfill the mitzvah of challah have one of the following three options, which are all "chatchilah":

- 1.They can firmly press the doughs together.
- 2.They can place the doughs, while touching each other, in one deep utensil.
- 3.They can leave the doughs on the counter or table and completely enwrap them in a towel or sheet.

After any one of these options is followed, challah may be separated as described above.

1. Rama, O.C. 529:1.
2. Rama, O.C. 242:1 and Beirur Halachah (s.v. ve'hu).
3. While some women find it difficult to adhere to this custom regularly, many still make a point of baking challos for the Shabbos after Pesach, for it is a tradition that baking challos on that Shabbos is a segulah for livelihood. Many follow the additional custom of baking challah in the form of a key or pressing a key into the dough (schlissel challah) to symbolize the key of parnasah. See Taamei ha-Minhagim 596-597 for the origin of this custom.
4. Rama, O.C. 242:1; 529:1.
5. Mishnah Berurah 242:6.
6. Kitzur Shulchan Aruch 38:8. See another reason in Bartenura, Shabbos 2:6.
7. Kaf ha-Chayim, O.C. 457:12. The appropriate nusach is quoted there. Some women have a custom to give charity before performing this mitzvah, as they do before lighting candles; Ben Ish Chai (Lech Lecha, 6)
8. Pischei Teshuvah, Y.D. 328:2; Aruch ha-Shulchan 328:5.
9. Mishnah Berurah 8:2. See Magen Avraham 8:1 and Shulchan Aruch ha-Rav 8:3, who allow separating challah and reciting the blessing while sitting.
10. Mishnah Berurah 457:5.
11. Rama, Y.D. 322:5.
12. Mishnah Berurah 206:18.
13. Rambam, Hilchos Bikurim 5:11; Chochmas Adam (Shaarei Tzedek 14:32); Kitzur Shulchan Aruch 35:1; Mikdash Me'at 328:1. Some have a custom to separate challah while reciting the blessing, while others separate challah after reciting the blessing; see Piskei Teshuvos 457, note 3. See Mikraei Kodesh, Pesach, vol. 2, pgs. 73-74, for an explanation of this issue.
14. Kaf ha-Chayim 457:10.
15. Rav Akiva Eiger, Y.D. 328:1; Chochmas Adam (Shaarei Tzedek 14:32). Many women, however, do not recite this statement; Haamek Sha'eilah 73:3. When challah is being separated without a blessing, this declaration is even more significant; see Imrei Shalom 3:60.
16. Water and other ingredients are not included in the minimum amount.
17. Our measurements are based on Gold Medal's estimate that a 5 lb. bag of flour will fill about

19 cups, or about 3.75 cups per pound. Bear in mind, however, that there is no precise conversion between the weight and volume of flour. The temperature, methods of storage, type of flour, how one fills the measuring cup and whether it is sifted, can all impact on this amount.

18. See the various opinions in Shemiras Shabbos Kâ€™™hilchasah 42:9 and Challah Kâ€™™hilchasah 5:2.

19. Based on Mishnah Berurah 457:7 and Beur Halachah.

20. The utensil must be sufficiently deep so that no dough [or baked item] will protrude from it.

21. Minchas Yitzchak 8:109 maintains that even if the doughs are in individual pans or bags and the pans are touching each other [and they are placed in one big deep utensil], the doughs are considered combined. Rav S.Z. Auerbach (Shemiras Shabbos Kâ€™™hilchasah 42, note 39) disagrees.

22. See Beur ha-Gra, Y.D. 325:3 (concerning an oven). See also Machazeh Eliyahu 111 and Shemiras Shabbos Kâ€™™hilchasah 42, note 39.

23. Beur Halachah 457:1.

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